

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

26119

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February 23, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE *JH*

SUBJECT:

The Sihanoukville Route

MORI/CDF C00196628 p3-4
C00196631 p5-18

At your request, Mr. Helms prepared an unclassified version of the CIA study on deliveries of supplies to the Communist forces operating against South Vietnam via the Sihanoukville route (Tab B). This study goes into some detail in showing the extent to which the Communist forces relied upon Sihanoukville for sustaining their operations in the southern half of South Vietnam. It could therefore be of considerable use in underlining the rationale for the President's decision to move into Cambodia.

However, Mr. Helms points out in his cover memorandum to you (Tab A) that release of this study might run the risk of providing enterprising reporters with the means of down-grading the impact of our Cambodian operation, since the supplies we captured fell significantly below the total volume of war materiel delivered to the Communists through Sihanoukville. For example, while we captured enough weapons to equip 74 infantry battalions, deliveries through Sihanoukville were sufficient to equip 600 infantry battalions.

Mr. Helms also points out that this unclassified statement implies the existence of a well-organized logistics system, and that it would take no great amount of imagination to figure out that the system would not have been able to function without the cooperation of very high Cambodian officials - some of whom must still be in the government today.

My personal reaction to Mr. Helms' caveats is that they are very well taken. Since public opinion has come to accept our Cambodian operation as being a success, it might be desirable not to release the study for general circulation, but to hold it in reserve for backgrounding carefully selected people who would not misuse it.

NSS/NSC Review Completed

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RECOMMENDATION

That you not authorize the general distribution of Mr. Helms' study but hold it in reserve for selective use in backgrounding persons who will not misuse it.

Approve

AK

Disapprove

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

22 February 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: The Sihanoukville Route

1. Attached is the unclassified statement on the Sihanoukville route you requested. I am sure it will prove the importance of the route and the critical nature of the Laos Panhandle now that Sihanoukville has been denied. May I note, however, that this paper could be used by critics to point up two areas of vulnerability.

2. First, an enterprising reporter could make unfavorable comparisons between the reporting on the results of last year's Cambodian operations on the one hand and figures on the amount of supplies delivered to Sihanoukville on the other. Using Administration figures, he could, for example, point out that although we captured enough weapons in Cambodia last year to equip 74 infantry battalions, deliveries to Sihanoukville were sufficient to equip more than eight times that number -- 600 infantry battalions. Other similar comparisons between amounts of materiel captured and deliveries to Sihanoukville are:

- About ten times as many individual weapons -- 222,000 delivered versus 22,892 captured.
- More than six times as many crew-served weapons -- 16,000 delivered versus 2,500 captured.
- More than eleven times as many rounds of small arms ammunition --- 173 million delivered versus 15 million captured.
- More than nine times as much rice -- 64,000 tons delivered versus 7,000 tons captured.

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3. Second, please note that this unclassified statement implies the existence of a well-organized logistic system which could not function without the cooperation of very high Cambodian officials.. It would not take much imagination to figure out that these must have been the same officials who now lead the current government.

Rich

Richard Helms
Director

Attachments - 2

Unclassified Statement on the
Sihanoukville Route

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The Sihanoukville Route

THE SIHANOUKVILLE ROUTE

INTRODUCTION

North Vietnam's offensive activities in South Vietnam have always been overwhelmingly dependent on the provision of personnel and material inputs from outside South Vietnam. Most of the manpower required to sustain its aggression has been provided from North Vietnam's own population. But without the substantial material and financial assistance provided by its Communist allies, Hanoi would have been unable to maintain a credible military threat to the peace and security of South Vietnam.

The traditional channel for moving men and supplies into South Vietnam was through an elaborate logistic system in the Lao Panhandle which the North Vietnamese have maintained for more than a decade. As the war expanded and the North Vietnamese required ever increasing amounts of supplies to carry on with the war, they began to expand their logistic system and to establish alternative logistic routes. This effort culminated in the establishment by late 1966 of a system for moving military supplies from Chinese ports through the port of Sihanoukville to VC/NVA base camps along the Cambodian/South Vietnamese border.

The so-called Sihanoukville route rapidly became a primary route for logistic support of the VC/NVA forces in southern South Vietnam, while the Laos route was used primarily to resupply the forces in the northern half of the country.

One of the results of the Allied incursions into Cambodia was that the United States government was able, through the capture of large amounts of enemy documents and the acquisition of other information, to obtain a detailed appreciation of the magnitude and importance of the Sihanoukville route. This document presents the major findings of our analysis of this evidence.

Development of the Sihanoukville Route

Even prior to the initiation of large-scale deliveries of military supplies to the port of Sihanoukville, the Communist forces made extensive use of Cambodian territory for base areas and sanctuary purposes. In addition it was common practice to purchase small amounts of supplies from Cambodians engaged in smuggling activities.

Over the years the use of Cambodia as a source of supplies, particularly for sorely needed foodstuffs, grew in importance. In early 1966, Cambodia became an active participant in Chinese Communist programs for

the provision of foodstuffs to Communist forces operating in the rice deficit areas of South Vietnam and Southern Laos. By the first quarter of 1970 the Communist forces in these rice deficit areas had received 64,200 tons of rice and over 3,300 tons of salt from the Cambodian market.

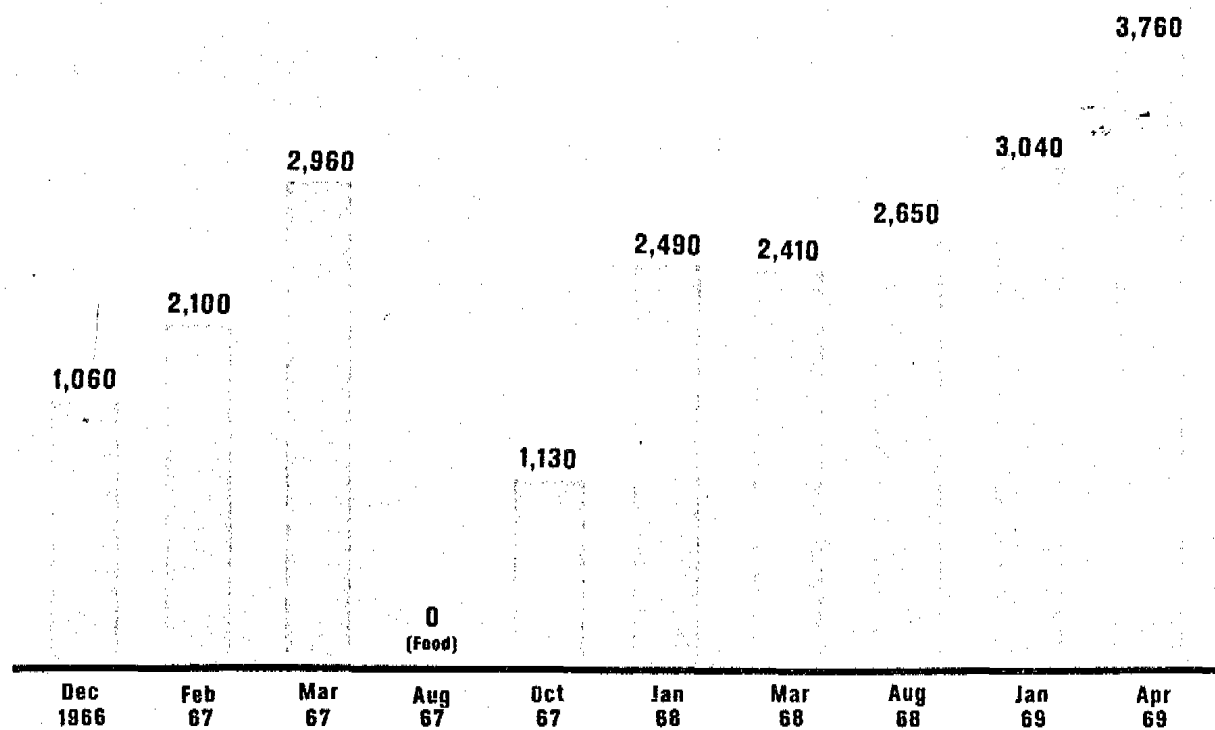
After less than a year of operation this arrangement was changed radically and Sihanoukville became a channel for the provision of all types of military supplies. In December 1966 the Chinese-flag ship He Ping arrived at Sihanoukville and discharged 1,060 tons of military cargo. This shipment, the first of at least ten deliveries, marked the opening of the so-called "Sihanoukville route." As such it was the cornerstone of what was to become over time an elaborate and sophisticated logistical system.

Chinese Deliveries to Sihanoukville

Between December 1966 and April 1969, Chinese Communist ships carried about 21,600 tons of military cargo (see Table 1), and about 5,300 tons of non-military supplies to Sihanoukville for delivery to VC/NVA forces. Military deliveries included weapons, ammunition and explosives, radios, and engineering equipment. Non-military supplies included food, medicine, and clothing.

CHINESE COMMUNIST DELIVERIES OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO SIHANOUKVILLE FOR VC/NVA FORCES

In Tons



Military Supplies

After the initial delivery in December 1966 the Communists took full advantage of the Sihanoukville route. Deliveries of military supplies totaled about 6,200 tons in 1967 and more than 7,500 tons in 1968.

In ^{1969,} ~~1970,~~ during the first four months alone, about 6,800 tons of military supplies were delivered to Sihanoukville.

The military deliveries consisted of extremely large quantities of weapons and ammunition. Included were 222,000 individual weapons, over 16,000 crew-served weapons, 173 million rounds for rifles and light machineguns, almost 11 million rounds for crew-served weapons, and over one-half million mines and hand grenades. The number of individual weapons delivered (rifles, pistols, and submachineguns) was sufficient to equip on a one-time basis over 600 VC/NVA infantry battalions; the number of crew-served weapons (heavy machineguns, mortars, and so forth) delivered could have equipped slightly over 200 battalions. Tables 1 through 4 provide detailed breakdowns on the ordnance delivered to Sihanoukville.

Non-Military Supplies

The first shipment of non-military supplies earmarked for the VC/NVA occurred in March 1967 with

the delivery of 20 tons of medical supplies on the He Ping. Non-military supplies, especially vitamin-enriched foods, were delivered on all subsequent shipments for a total of 5,300 tons. Indeed, such food was the only cargo delivered on the Ji Ning in August 1967. These vitamin-enriched foods were used primarily to improve the diet of convalescing sick and wounded soldiers. The very large delivery of these foods on the Ji Ning (1,240 tons) as well as on the You Yi (960 tons) in January 1968 undoubtedly reflected Communist preparation for the general offensive during Tet-1968.

Deliveries to Border Areas

Our evidence enabled us to trace the movement of more than 18,000 tons or 85 percent of military deliveries to VC/NVA base camps in Cambodia. These bases were arrayed along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border from Ratanakiri Province in the northeast to Kampot Province in the south.

Deliveries of ordnance to these enemy sanctuaries reached a peak in 1967, when more than 7,700 tons were delivered to Communist base areas. Deliveries remained high in 1968, when almost 6,400 tons were delivered. In the months immediately before the

Allied incursions into Cambodia last spring, 1,600 tons were delivered to the Communist sanctuaries. Details on deliveries to the border areas are given in Table 5.

CHINESE COMMUNIST MILITARY DELIVERIES TO VC/NVA FORCES VIA SIHANOUKVILLE, 1966-1970

Note: Information on border deliveries is incomplete. For this reason tonnages delivered to border areas are not identical with tonnages delivered to Sihanoukville.

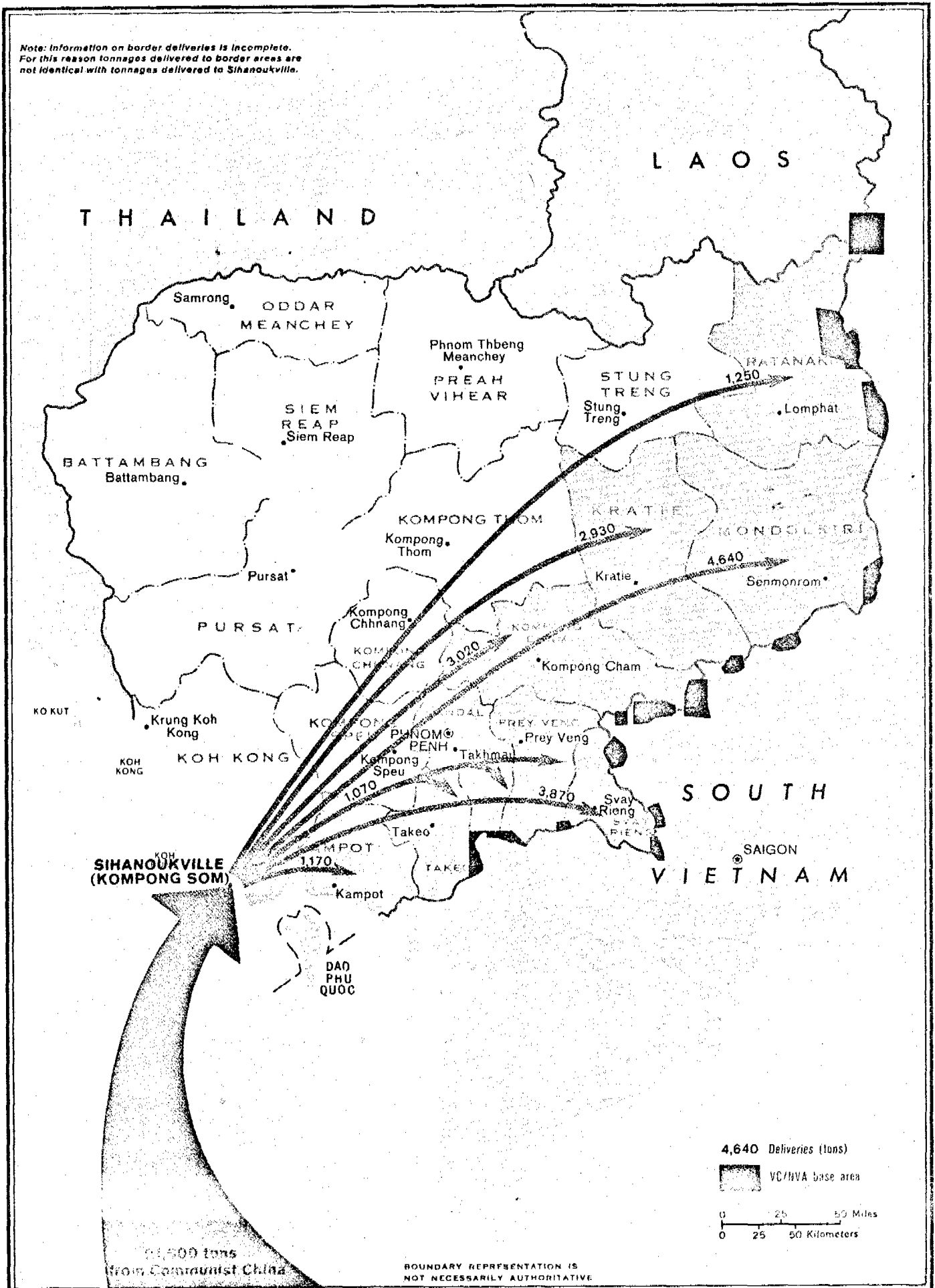


Table 1

Chinese Communist Deliveries to Sihanoukville for VC/NVA Forces
December 1966 - April 1969

	Ship Names										Tons
	He Ping Dec 1966	Hang Zhou Feb 1967	He Ping Mar 1967	Ji Ning Aug 1967	You Yi Oct 1967	You Yi Jan 1968	Wu Xi Mar 1968	Fo Shan Aug 1968	Li Ming Jan 1969	Huang Shi Apr 1969	Total
Military	1,060	2,100	2,960	0	1,130	2,490	2,410	2,650	3,040	3,760	21,600
Ammunition	980	1,820	2,460	--	730	1,800	1,620	1,830	2,030	3,130	16,400
Weapons	20	150	390	--	230	300	390	440	430	230	2,590
Other	60	130	110	--	170	390	400	370	570	400	2,610
Non-military	0	0	20	1,240	110	1,020	50	1,400	980	520	5,330
Food	--	--	--	1,240	--	960	--	790	720	410	4,120
Clothing	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	390	--	--	390
Medical	--	--	20	--	110	60	50	220	260	120	830
Total	1,060	2,100	2,980	1,240	1,240	3,500	2,460	4,040	4,020	4,290	26,930

Table 2

Deliveries of Weapons and Ammunition
to Sihanoukville for VC/NVA Forces, by Year

	Tons	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Weapons</u>	<u>Ammunition</u>
1966 (December)	20	980
1967	770	5,010
1968	1,130	5,250
1969	670	5,160
Total	<u>2,590</u>	<u>16,400</u>

Table 3

Weapons Delivered to Sihanoukville
for VC/NVA Forces

<u>Individual Weapons</u>	<u>Units</u>
7.62-mm pistol, Type 54	30,900
7.62-mm submachinegun, Type 56	115,000
7.62-mm semiautomatic rifle, Type 56	64,000
7.62-mm light machinegun, Type 53	130
7.62-mm submachinegun, Type 54	2,500
7.62-mm AK submachinegun	100
7.62-mm submachinegun, Type 56 (56-1)	3,000
7.62-mm machinegun, Type 56	5,700
Individual rifles	500
Total	<u>221,830</u>
<u>Crew-served Weapons</u>	
7.62-mm heavy machinegun, Type 57	1,450
12.7-mm AA machinegun, Type 54	600
40-mm rocket launcher, Type 56	9,000
60-mm mortar	1,800
82-mm mortar	1,250
120-mm mortar	120
75-mm recoilless rifle	390
57-mm recoilless rifle	250
107-mm rocket launcher	30
RPG launcher	1,190
Total	<u>16,080</u>

Table 4

Ammunition Delivered to Sihanoukville
for VC/NVA Forces

<u>Individual Rounds</u>	<u>Units</u>
7.62-mm Type 56 incendiary cartridges	7,000,000
7.62-mm pistol, Type 51	9,200,000
7.62-mm rifle, Type 56	39,150,000
7.62-mm machinegun, Type 56	83,360,000
7.62-mm steel core, Type 53	22,450,000
7.9-mm cartridge, rifle	4,000,000
7.62-mm tracer, Type 56	7,750,000
7.62-mm tracer, Type 53	200,000
CKC launcher antitank rounds	24,800
CKC rifle grenades	71,900
Type AT/K44 AT grenade	20,000
Antitank grenades for rifles	30,000
Total	<u>173,300,000</u>
<u>Crew-served Rounds</u>	
RPG 7 ammunition	79,900
40-mm rocket	397,000
107-mm rocket	15,000
60-mm mortar	365,200
82-mm mortar	639,200
12.7-mm, Type 54	8,120,500
85-mm	10,000
120-mm mortar	53,000
57-mm recoilless	60,000
75-mm recoilless	90,000
Rockets (not further identified)	15,000
12.7-mm, Type 54 AA machinegun	400,000
12.7-mm, Type 54 AA machinegun tracer	100,100
14.5-mm	340,100
37-mm	36,000
Total	<u>10,700,000</u>

Table 5

Ordinance Deliveries
to Border Areas, by Province

	Tons				
	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
Mondolkiri	20	3,090	850	380	300
Svay Rieng	--	900	2,160	700	100
Kompong Cham	70	1,480	1,120	270	90
Kratie	--	410	1,660	600	260
Ratanakiri	--	980	260	--	--
Kampot	20	440	260	200	240
Prey Veng/ Kandal/Takeo	--	260	--	200	610
Other	--	160	80	--	--
Total	<u>110</u>	<u>7,740</u>	<u>6,390</u>	<u>2,360</u>	<u>1,600</u>

Note: Information on border deliveries is incomplete. For this reason total tonnages delivered above do not exactly agree with tonnages delivered to Sihanoukville.